

# Caring for arthritis

Arthritis is a degenerative condition that affects joints and connective tissues. This causes pain, swelling and restricted movement. It is the most common cause of work disability among adults. While there is no cure for arthritis, there are effective ways to treat and manage the symptoms.



## BE ACTIVE

Physical activity is one of the best ways to manage arthritis symptoms. A safe exercise program can:

- Reduce joint pain
- Decrease stiffness
- Build strength
- Improve flexibility
- Increase endurance

Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program. To protect joints, choose low-impact activities such as:

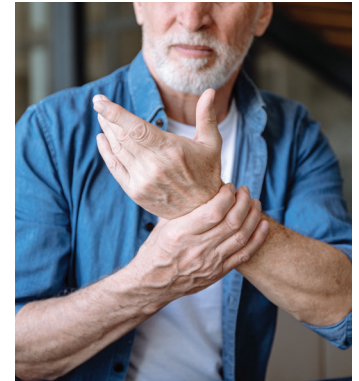
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Brisk walking
- Tai chi or yoga
- Strength training



## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Maintaining a healthy weight reduces stress on your joints. If you are overweight, losing some weight can decrease pain and stiffness from arthritis. Achieving a healthy weight protects the weight-bearing joints, such as the hips and knees, as well as prevents injuries and improves mobility.

- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each week. Remember, it should be low-impact.
- Increase your intake of high-fiber, plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes.
- Decrease your intake of highly processed foods such as cakes, candies, cookies, chips, fries, fast food, and sugary beverages.
- Manage stress by making time for relaxation. Yoga, meditation, exercise, and time in nature are all ways to reduce stress.



## TREATMENT

There are over 100 different types of arthritis. Proper diagnosis by a doctor ensures you receive the best treatment. Early medical treatment of arthritis protects the long-term health of your joints and reduces symptoms.

Treatment your doctor may recommend includes:

- Medication to manage pain and prevent joint damage
- Physical therapy to improve joint function and reduce pain
- Surgery if there is joint damage. This may include repair or replacement of the joint.
- Self-management education programs to teach you how best to manage your arthritis. Ask your doctor about available programs.

